

have black heads. One female from Mysore (20.1.1940) has the forehead and anterior part of the crown olive green with prominent dark centres and shafts to the feathers and the rest black. A female from Palni Hills (10.5.1956) and another from Nilgiris (20.2.1943) have their crown concolorous to the back, e.g. greyish olive.

One specimen from Castle Rock, Kanara (10.10.1912) marked male is a juvenile female with a black crown. The unsexed specimen from Shembagnur, Palni Hills (1958) is an adult female by plumage with greyish olive crown and back.

There is no evidence for polymorphism in females of this race as stated by Whistler and Salim Ali. Since both the females with black heads are marked juveniles it is suggested that this is a stage before the post juvenile moult. This is confirmed by the fact that we have a female specimen with a crown half olive and half black, in the process of moulting, the black crown of the juvenile female being replaced by the adult olive green. I come to the conclusion that phase 1 females with black crown and black ventral stripes are wrongly sexed specimens, phase 2 with black crowns and olive green ventral stripes are juveniles and phase 3 with olive green crowns and olive green ventral stripes are the actual adult females

of this race.

From the northern Himalaya to southern Travancore, there is a cline of gradually decreasing brightness in the plumage of this species; *xanthogenys*, the northernmost nominate race with brightest yellow and olive green in their plumage, the central *aplonotus* less bright, or dull green and yellow and the southern most *travancoreensis* being much duller with the mantle almost lacking green and being greyish, the yellow very pale and the adult females all being grey with only a slight tinge of yellow below. As far as sexual dimorphism is concerned southern *travancoreensis* with its entirely different sexes tops the three. In *aplonotus* the difference between the sexes is only in the colour of the ventral stripe and in the northern *xanthogenys* the sexes are almost same. The size of the crest also follows this pattern. In *xanthogenys* the size of the crest is more or less the same in both sexes, *aplonotus* females have a shorter crest than the male and *travancoreensis* females have hardly any crest.

I am indebted to Humayun Abdulali, my 'Guru' in ornithology, for going through the manuscript.

February 21, 1992

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## 18. INTERESTING FEEDING PATTERN OF YELLOWTHROATED SPARROW *PETRONIA XANTHOCOLLIS* (BURTON)

Amongst various species of birds observed feeding on mahua *Madhuca indica* flowers were yellowthroated sparrows *Petronia xanthocollis*. Their feeding pattern was rather interesting.

A juicy flower was plucked and carried to a nearby thick branch, placed on rough bark for a while, and then dragged backwards for about 50 cm with downward pressure applied with the beak. The partly battered flower was picked up, again placed about 30 cm ahead and dragged back. This act was

repeated three or four times till the flower was almost reduced to fragments, which were then eaten. Thereafter, another flower was plucked and the entire act repeated.

Inability of the species to swallow the whole flower could be the reason for adopting the above feeding pattern.

April 1, 1990

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## 19. 'BLIND' NEST OF BLACKTHROATED WEAVER BIRD *PLOCEUS BENGHALENSIS* (LINN.)

'Blind nests' (i.e. abnormal nests without an entrance) are sometimes prepared by weaver birds. The phenomenon has been described by Davis (1985, *JBNHS* 82(3): 658-660) in baya weaver bird *Ploceus*

*philippinus*. This tendency also occurs in the blackthroated weaver bird *Ploceus benghalensis*.

During the breeding season of 1989, in the river bed of Nahawani river near Harsora dam in Alwar